

Vietnam irks EU by delaying meeting ahead of possible Putin visit

HANOI, May 9 (Reuters) - Vietnam's foreign affairs ministry has annoyed the European Union by postponing a meeting next week with the EU's top official on Russian sanctions, ahead of a possible visit to Hanoi by Russia's President Vladimir Putin.

Vietnam has been striving to pursue a neutral foreign policy in its relations with major world powers. It has abstained from condemning Russia's attack on Ukraine, a position that Western countries see as too close to the Kremlin.

Special envoy for the implementation of EU sanctions, David O'Sullivan, is visiting Southeast Asia next week and had planned to meet Vietnamese officials on May 13-14, but Hanoi asked to delay the meeting "as leaders were too busy to meet with him," one diplomat with direct knowledge of the situation said.

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